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# Josef Fares' *Zozo* as Accented Cinema

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# Josef Fares' *Zozo* as Accented Cinema

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# Dedication

To the memory of my parents.

# Abstract

## Josef Fares' *Zozo* as Accented Cinema

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In 2005, the Lebanese-Swedish filmmaker Josef Fares, who had attained recognition in Sweden through the immigrant comedies *Jalla! Jalla!* (2000) and *Kopps* (2003), presented his third feature film and first drama, *Zozo,* inspired by Fares's own migration to Sweden. Set in 1987 Beirut, *Zozo* portrays a ten-year boy who loses his parents during the Lebanese Civil War and who journeys to reunite with his grandparents already settled in Sweden. In Sweden, Zozo is forced to learn the host country's language quickly and to understand the unwritten rules of his new culture. Like his grandparents, he will probably always have an accent and be recognizably the "other." The film became Sweden's national submission to the 78th Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film and its nomination not only raised questions on what Sweden and Swedishness mean in a contemporary global world, but it also reexamined the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory in a borderless Europe.

In this essay I argue that *Zozo* is an illustration of accented film, which means the film is neither Swedish nor Lebanese, but a combination of both. Influenced by his deterritorialization from Lebanon and his current life in Sweden, the cinematographic stylistic choices of Josef Fares exhibit a "double consciousness" - multiple cultural identities at once. To further understand the Lebanese and Swedish elements in the film, I analyze how elements such as chronotopes (time-space), border crossing, epistolarity,

and double consciousness are inscribed in the film. In addition, I use Laura U. Marks' concept of fossils, radioactive recollection-objects. By employing Hamid Naficy's accented cinema theory, I hope to explain how Josef Fares is neither Swedish nor Lebanese, but an individual with multicultural identities, which reflect in the elements of the narrative and cinematographic style.

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## Introduction

In 2005, the Lebanese-Swedish filmmaker Josef Fares, who had attained recognition in Sweden through the immigrant comedies *Jalla! Jalla!* (2000) and *Kopps* (2003), presented his third feature film and first drama, *Zozo,* inspired by Fares's own migration to Sweden. Set in 1987 Beirut, *Zozo* portrays a ten-year boy who loses his parents during the Lebanese Civil War and who journeys to reunite with his grandparents already settled in Sweden. The film became Sweden's national submission to the 78th Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film and its nomination not only raised questions on what Sweden and Swedishness mean in a contemporary global world, but it also reexamined the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory in a borderless Europe. As immigrants from all over the world, particularly post-colonial countries, continue to arrive in Europe, their diasporas challenge "the imaginary and imagined borders and boundaries erected by [a no longer] fortified Europe" (Loshitzky 8). Therefore, native Europeans struggle, if not attempt to anchor themselves, in "a coherent and unified geographical, political, and cultural identity" that continues to be threatened by the fluidity of these "ethnoscapes"[1] (Loshitzky 8). For that reason, the analysis of the film *Zozo* is critical to Swedish national cinema as the narrative addresses the themes of host culture, belongingness and multiculturalism in a global world.

[1] A term developed by Arjun Appardurai in "Depictions and Differences of Global Cultural Economy" (1990), '*ethnoscapes'* refers to the migration of people across cultures and borders, presenting the world and its many communities as fluid and mobile instead of static (590).

With Fares's cultural *position*[2] reflecting on his past in Lebanon from his present in Sweden, the film *Zozo* displays the hybridity of two cultural identities: Lebanese and Swedish. Through the eyes of the ten-year-old Zozo, we perceive his deterritorialization and displacement as an echo of "the traumatic experiences of surviving a war and of migrating to a new country" (Lacatus 121). The cultural hybridity in the narrative of the film has attracted the attention of scholars in Middle Eastern studies, who consider it part of the Lebanese post-Civil War film tradition, while Swedish film scholars like Rochelle Wright and Corina Lacatus have also considered *Zozo* to be part of the Swedish "immigrant film" wave. According to Stuart Hall, "[cultural identities] are constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" and "'framed' by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture" (*Cultural Identity and Diaspora* 226). This vector of continuity, which gives some grounding and continuity with the past, reflects on both Zozo and Josef Fares, whose "present" takes place in Sweden; and both have a rupture from their country of origin, Lebanon. Fares' narrative "build[s] on an ideology of multiculturalism as the ideal solution to ethnic conflict, discrimination, and intolerance. Looking beyond thematic and structural differences, [the] film share[s] an essentially optimistic view of migration as a social process" (Lacatus 107).

[2] Stuart Hall explains that position – a "cut" of identity – makes meaning possible "as a natural and permanent, rather than an arbitrary and contingent 'ending'" (230).

In this essay I argue that *Zozo* is an illustration of accented film, which means the film is neither Swedish nor Lebanese, but a combination of both. Influenced by his deterritorialization from Lebanon and his current life in Sweden, the cinematographic stylistic choices of Josef Fares exhibit a "double consciousness" - multiple cultural identities at once. To further understand the Lebanese and Swedish elements in the film, I analyze how elements such as chronotopes (time-space), border crossing, epistolarity, and double consciousness are inscribed in the film. In addition, I use Laura U. Marks' concept of fossils, radioactive recollection-objects. By employing Hamid Naficy's accented cinema theory, I hope to explain how Josef Fares is neither Swedish nor Lebanese, but an individual with multicultural identities, which reflect in the elements of the narrative and cinematographic style.

**Historical Background**

At the turn of the millennium the notion of "immigrant film" received a great deal of media attention in Sweden (Wright 292). At the 2001 Gothenburg Film Festival, Swedish filmmakers of non-Western backgrounds presented feature films that emphasized the issues experienced by first and second-generation immigrants. The major theme at the film festival was "double identity," and the Swedish entries were *Jalla! Jalla!* (2000) by Josef Fares (Lebanese-Swedish), *Vingar av glas/Wings of Glass* (2000) by Reza Bagher (Iranian-Swedish), and *Före stormen/Before the Storm* (2000) by Reza Parsa (Iranian-Swedish) were screened. These films "incorporate[d] the experiences of characters who, like their creators, are immigrants from the Middle East" (Wright 292).

According to the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter,* the film festival "handlar om det stora flödet av filmer skapade av människor med splittrad etnisk bakgrund/ was about the flood of movies created by people with fragmented ethnic backgrounds" (Sandberg). From Sandberg's article, we can gather that Swedish culture didn't seem ready to openly talk about multiculturalism, but considered these second-generation filmmakers as people with "fragmented ethnic backgrounds." Their perception of the self could be Swedish, but their identity included other cultural backgrounds that have not yet been explored. In cultural studies, W.E.B. Du Bois coined the term "double consciousness" to explain these 'fragmented' or multicultural identities.

According to Du Bois, the term "double consciousness" means "a peculiar sensation, [a] sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (quoted in Marino 130). In other words, double consciousness means that an individual experiences the self as divided into several facets. These facets have been influenced by geographical mobility, contact with other cultures, and upbringing in a different land other than parent's homeland. In a way, Josef Fare could have been influenced by those factors and created a multicultural identity.

Born in 1977, when the Lebanese civil war had already started, Josef Fares migrated to Sweden at the age of ten. Because of his Assyrian-Syrian background, Fares can be considered to have experienced double consciousness or an identity dichotomy due to his multicultural background. With his filmmaking, Fares explores what being Lebanese-Swedish means in a contemporary world while he also embodies

and treats themes on "divided facets" and "fragmented identities." This linkage between film and cultural identity or fragmented identities is what Rey Chow describes as a relationship between absence and presence, between disappearance and reappearance (94).

As Chow explains, "the filmic representation reproduces a world with a resemblance" (94). Reconsidering of the life in the homeland creates narratives that explore myths, rituals, customs, and practices while also reflecting on a culture. This reflection is "inevitable [and] involves the rethinking of origins – the "pasts" that give rise to the present moment" (Chow 97). By rethinking of his origins and deterritorialization, Fares provides an immigrant perspective on how migration and assimilation work in Sweden. Inevitably, this filmmaker portrays the relationship between absence and presence, between disappearance and reappearance, and particularly, how these divided facets can be negotiated between the natives of Sweden and the immigrants from the Middle East.

To reappropriate the past and present, in the context of cinema, there is the need of "suture," which means "sewing-up" (Chow 95). With suture, a person stiches together the double or multiple identities an individual can carry. The individual no longer has to see himself as the *other,* but as a mirror to the West as well as the East. The suture allows the person to gain access to a coherent identity. In other words, suture is the moment when the viewing subject can recognize himself or herself in the screen. Kaja Silverman describes this moment as occurring when the individual says "'Yes, that's me, or That's what I see" (Chow 96).

By suturing his Western and Middle Eastern identities, Fares uses his film as a "primary symbolic and political place" for change (Gilroy 27). These narratives enable filmmakers to re-cast the space of the imagined homeland and host land while also allowing them to reinterpret, reconstruct, reinscript and relocate both spaces through art. The use of film helps incorporate 'minority discourse' narratives and articulate "a desire to escape the restrictive bonds of ethnicity, national identification, and sometimes even "race" itself" (Gilroy 19). According to Lacatus, Fares uses film as a "representational medium to represent a state of cultural in-between-ness and a sense of cultural uprootdness" (120). The filmmaker re-casts and incorporates minority discourse, and he prompts transformation in a nation and culture, Sweden and Swedishness.[3]

This quest for cultural transformation is portrayed by Fares in his films. In *Jalla! Jalla!* (Fares 2000), Fares explores the process of integration and assimilation that immigrant families experience in the new country and their negotiation with the host culture. The film focuses on how two individuals with contrasting ethnic backgrounds negotiate love across cultures. In contrast, his film *Leo* (Fares 2007) brings into play the self-identification of multiple hybrid and hyphenated characters, who are coping with trauma. The film explores subjects such as morality, racism and ethics along with gang violence in Sweden. While his first feature films are entirely based in the life of the characters in Sweden and the multicultural identity they experience, his third feature film *Zozo* (2005) treats the process of 'double consciousness' by closely following the

[3] In *The Black Atlantic,* Gilroy mentions that to appropriate/reappropiate English and Englishness, there are some elements needed to be embodied by the artist (11).

character of Zozo, his departure from the homeland and arrival in the host land, and his experiences before and after migration.

Drawing on his own personal experience, Fares narrates the journey of Zozo, a boy who voyages from Lebanon to Sweden in the late 80s amidst the Lebanese civil war (1972-1990). The narrative shows the character of Zozo during a transitional time and incorporates details of his life in the homeland, his journey to the new land, and his struggles of adapting to a new culture. The film marked Fares' return to Lebanon for the first time after seventeen years. However, due to his absence from Lebanon, the depictions of the homeland he remembered and how it is can have gaps or can be imagined. Hall calls this "experience the shock of the "doubleness" of similarity and difference" (227). Fares may well have experienced the doubleness of similarity and difference during his return. These features are another depiction of double consciousness. The sense of double consciousness invites the filmmaker to challenge the notion of truth or the relation between representation and reality. While the films are intercultural, there is a "minority discourse" that marks "a shift in the politics of representation of others and strangers in European Cinema" (Loshitzky 9). By challenging notion of truth or relation between representation and reality, minority discourses helps to transcend the traditional understanding of "national cinema."

But what is "national cinema" in a migrant world? With the flow of media, finance, technology, migrants and ideologies, national identities and borders have been contested. Therefore, several filmmakers have portrayed their personal recollections of their homeland, exile, migration, diaspora and deterritorialization throughout their film

narratives and cinematic stylistic choices (Naficy 10). These thematic and filmmaking practices became a trend and prompted Naficy to create the term "accented cinema." Through these "accented" narratives, the filmmakers explore the structure of sutures and how subject and cultural worlds are inhabited. By suturing or portraying personal recollections, subject and cultural worlds are stabilized and become "reciprocally more unified and predictable" (*An Intro to Modern Societies* 596).

**Hamid Naficy's Accented Cinema**

Naficy coined the term "accented cinema" to describe the trend of post-colonial and Third World filmmaking in the West after the 1960s. The trend was exhibited not only similarities in stylistic choices, but also in the narratives that reflected the personal migration of the filmmakers out of the homeland, their diaspora, and life in the new homeland. According to Aksoy and Robinson, "Migration involves both 'spatial dislocation' and 'temporal dislocation': it is about separation and distance from the homeland, and also involves the experience of discontinuity between past and present" and accented cinema reflects on these particular themes (90). The spatial and temporal (dis)location take place while in the homeland, during the diaspora or exile, or while already settled in the new homeland.

Even though the narratives differ from director to director, the core themes portrayed in the film concern the homeland and host land. These films enhance the feelings of nostalgia, multilingualism, and cross-cultural misunderstanding throughout their narratives. Similarly, the narrative structures focus on journeying, historicity, displacement, identity, territory, and (dis)location of the filmmaker (Naficy 4). In other

words, accented cinema denotes "filmmakers who came and made films in the West," but their origins are in Third World and post-colonial countries (10).

To characterize each of these narratives, Naficy divided accented cinema into three types of film: diasporic, exilic, and postcolonial ethnic and identity (11). Since the trajectory of every director is different, his or her narratives and stylistic choices can be distinctive. The films are subcategorized into the three types of accented cinema. The first is exile. The term exile suggests "a painful or punitive banishment from one's homeland" (Peters 19). It can be either voluntary or involuntary internal or external. Nevertheless, it forces the filmmaker to approach auterism (Naficy 11). Exilic film aims to become the political voice that might have been repressed in the homeland and might impact the homeland from the West. The second is diasporic. Diaspora refers to people who live outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce (Marino 128). As a diaspora, they have scattered and reconstituted in dispersion (Peters 20). Diasporic cinema portrays themes about the collective memory and consciousness of the homeland, but also to the plurality in the host land. However, the individuals are not barred from returning to the country, as in some exiles, but the diasporas might have migrated due to trade, business, imperial, colonial, and cultural factors. Diasporas tend to be collective whereas exiles are frequently individual (Naficy 14). The third, and last, category of accented cinema is postcolonial ethnic and identity films. These films depict "by the exigencies of life here and now in the country in which the filmmakers reside on the problems experienced in

the host country" (Naficy 15). As films often show intersections of these three categories, accented films do not exclusively have to belong to one category. What makes the film belong into one or several of these categories depends on how the filmmakers portray the film's narrative in relationship to the homeland.

### *Zozo* as in Accented Cinema

Accented cinema is characterized as having a multilingual and self-reflexive style, an ambiguous narrative, an identity and displacement crisis, and a common feeling of nostalgia (Naficy 4). As the displaced filmmakers become aware of their fragmented identity, they can also recognize different parts of their identities and personal histories and use them to construct points of identification. Those points of identifications are positions – a cut of identity in a plane. In retrospect, the positions make possible natural and permanent 'cultural identities' (*Cultural Identities and Diaspora* 237). Aksoy and Robins explain that the "theme of separation and distance has been made to figure in contemporary discourses on migrant identity" (90).

In this tradition, filmmakers create personal and (auto)biographical narratives that portray three types of journeys that elaborate on their diaspora, their lives in the host country and their people, such as outward journeys of escape: home seeking and home founding, journeys of quest: homelessness, and lostness, and inward, homecoming journeys (Naficy 33). For this paper, I elaborate on how *Zozo* exemplifies the outward journey of escape, for Zozo escapes Lebanon in an attempt to reach a home in Sweden with his grandparents.

The film opens in Beirut 1987. *Zozo'*s opening sequence resembles Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's film *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961). As Fares identity can be considered as "nomadic, a metaphor, a carrying-across," Bhabha explains "we must be prepared to find emulation, hybridity, mimicry, and parody everywhere" (Naficy 37). Therefore, it is not rare that the scenes are mimetic to each other. In Bergman's film, four members of a family are bathing in the ocean before the narrative explains the impact of Karin's schizophrenia on the others. Similarly, *Zozo* opens with four people in the water laughing while a little boy observes them from the beach unable to join them. Even though the narrative *Zozo* begins in Lebanon, the similarity between both films' opening sequences gives the viewer an understanding of Bergman's influence on Fares' filmmaking. Bergman seemed fascinated by the reflection of the characters in water as part of their divided facets and multiple identities. Fares may have imitated Bergman, but he could have also portrayed his own sense of disconnection and distance from both cultures. In the film *Zozo,* the main character experiences and mirrors his 'divided facets' and his own perception of self-identity during and after his migration to Sweden in water.

The sense of lostness between cultures is a characteristic for accented filmmakers. As a result, instead of "repeating," Fares is "re-presenting." Bhabha explains that even though there is a desire to emerge as "authentic," there is a final irony in the representation. Through the process of writing and repetition, the appropriation is "at once resemblance and menace" (*Of Mimicry and Man* 154). Bergman and Fares use their main characters in *Through a Glass Darkly* and *Zozo* to express a shared sense of lostness. While Bergman is known for portraying women as leading characters, Fares has

consistently focused on immigrant males. Perhaps the slippage in the "authentic" is that Fares represents in his films male characters rather than females as Bergman did in his filmmaking.

According to Matthew Potolsky, the tendency towards mimesis or imitation is part human behavior as the individual repeats the actions inherited from the past or absorbed from larger social contexts. However, according to Bhabha, "the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision" (*Of Mimicry and Man* 126). The mimicry destroys the narcissistic of colonial power authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire, and therefore, the opening scene of both films resemble each other, and perhaps Fares imitated Bergman. However, the repetitious slippage of difference and desire in the scene also represents mimicry and difference.

The mimesis between Bergman and Fares' scenes can be noted as a "sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power" (*Of Mimicry and Man* 126). This appropriation is hybrid in narrative and cinematography. Even though the film has similar stylistic choices to Bergman, the cultural identity of Fares transforms the narrative to a hybrid. The mimesis also produces "hybridity." Hybridity occurs when how things and ideas are "repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition" but also entails how this process of relocation can stimulate new utterances and creativity" (*Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences* 156).

In a sense, the "object" recorded is no longer simply the "third world" but "the West itself as mirrored in the eyes and handiwork of its others" (Taussig quoted in Chow

163). During an interview, Fares explained 'Det är inte självbiografiskt, men självfallet finns det med en massa stämningar som jag själv minns från Beirut/ [*Zozo*] is not autobiographical, but obviously there are a lot of feelings that I myself remember from Beirut' (Svedjetun, *Aftonbladet,* 2004). There is the ambivalence over exile and homecoming. "These modes of subjectivity and identification acquire a renewed political change in the post-imperial history" (Gilroy 10). For Fares, his film echoes his past in Beirut while also attempting to promote political change in Sweden. In other words, it can be interpreted as a form which aims to come to terms with the past in the present.

In *Zozo,* we move from the beach and the shot continues to a pan up the camera to the sky. The scene shows the stars at night and then a panoramic view of Lebanon. Once the viewer is situated in Lebanon, the bombings in Beirut begin. Consequently, we are thrust to the Lebanese civil war. We are first introduced to the main character Zozo when we see him playing soccer with his friends in the completely dried out Beirut river. In cinema, the extreme long shot, or panoramic view, of the city along expresses sadness, loneliness and isolation along with the bombing creates tension and suspense from early on. We know the war is already in the city and part of the city.

Through the first scenes, we are also introduced to Zozo's home space and his family. The apartment where they live is quite simple, humble, and perhaps religious, for on one of the walls, there hangs the image of Saint Charbel, a Maronite monk and priest from Lebanon. Known as the saint of people who suffer in body and spirit, Saint Charbel's image can be symbolic and an allegory for the suffering of Lebanese society during the civil war, and perhaps the particular suffering of this family. From seeing this

saint's image, we gather that Zozo's family is Maronite Christian. This is further supported by Zozo's father sharing the same name as the saint and Zozo's name being the nickname of the Christian name Josef.

The varied perspective of the exterior shots of the city and then the interior shots of the apartment make the film theatrical and the frames are used as a proscenium. With static camera shots in the interior, the story space is a stagey one. Symbolically, it appeals to the constraint the family experiences. In the narrative, the family is waiting for the visas to arrive, so they can depart from Lebanon and reunite with the paternal grandparents. Even though Sweden is an abstract place, it is imbued "with special meaning and value" (Naficy 154), for Zozo and his family have a relation to the country and thus social relations already established there. Even though Zozo is looking forward to life in Sweden, he is afraid that his family will leave him behind. These fears are recurrent in his dreams where he feels small and distant from his family in the opening sequences. The imaginative geography and history helps Zozo's own "mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (*Cultural Identity and Diaspora* 232). It is uncertain whether the sense of distance from the family is an of their dying later on in the narrative or how Fares and Zozo feel distanced from the homeland due to their (future) migration. Nevertheless, the migration is "– a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion – is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons" (Gilroy 4). These multilayered temporalities are subverted in time and political construction. The temporal condition of

migrancy fixes the family in time and space to Beirut, but links them to a future in Sweden.

**Chronotopes in the Imagined Homeland**

Proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, chronotopes are a "unit of analysis" that constructs narrative space and time. In accented cinema, chronotopes encode, embody and represent the home, exile and transitional sites linked to the homeland's inherited space-time and the exile and diaspora's constructed time-space (Naficy 154). There is a temporal dimension that depends on the displacement in space. For Naficy, these chronotopes are divided into three categories: chronotopes in the (imagined) homeland, chronotopes of life in exile, and thirdspace chronotopes. The types of chronotopes differ according on how the character and *mise-en-scène* are situated spatially in context to open, close or transitional forms.

The chronotopes of the (imagined) homeland are in perspective of loss and nostalgia from the individual to the homeland. Contemporary facts can affect and influence the enunciations of the filmmakers' cultural positionality.[4] The open form chronotopes of the (imagined) homeland situate the character in open spaces, particularly nature, landscapes, and landmarks in the place of origin. Composed by long shots and long takes, these scenes can be seen in Zozo's homeland. For example, in the second scene, we are situated in Lebanon in a panoramic shot. This is an example of the

[4] Stuart Hall mentions the word *position* to the form and way – we speak and write. In other words, this position of *enunciation* refers to how we see ourselves and how we perceive things from our experience (222).

chronotope of the (imagined) homeland. The scene positions the viewer inside the city and incorporates him to in the day-to-day life of the characters. Fares uses these chronotopes mostly to explore the moments of happiness in Zozo's life.

These open spaces start when we are introduced to Zozo playing soccer with his friends. In this long shot, we also get to see the dried out riverbed of Beirut and the surroundings buildings in the area. We follow Zozo and his friends playing in the streets of Beirut and attending school. In its *mise-en-scène*, Fares uses a Christian cross next to the school's bell to remind the viewer of the politics of religion during the war. These open form space scenes favor external locations with "bright natural lighting, and mobile and wandering diegetic characters" (Naficy 153). In fact, we continue to see the beauty and greatness of the city of Beirut. The open form chronotopes of the (imagined) homeland end with Zozo in a transitional space, the checkpoint before the airport.

Although there are several open form chronotopes, the characters experience constriction and restriction in the homeland. These chronotopes are considered to be closed. In contrast to the open form spaces, the closed form chronotopes' employ interior locations and closed settings in its *mise-en-scène*. According to Naficy, the dark lighting creates mood of constriction, imprisonment and panic, and "the characters are restricted in their movements and perspective by spatial, bodily, or other barriers" (153). These closed form chronotopes are best exemplified in the apartment, the bunker, and the trash container. The first time we become acquainted to Zozo's homespace, the apartment has an interior that creates a mood of constriction. The family seems to be living in tight

quarters and appears to be restricted in movement. When Zozo attempts to show his carved piece of wood to his family, they are watching the news and ignore him. Though Zozo seems to have a good relationship with the family, the city's war has been taken indoors and created barriers among the family.

Then, as the family eats dinner, there are close-ups of the faces of the family members before their dinner is disturbed by bombings in the area. Balázs notes, "close-ups are often dramatic revelations of what is really happening under the surface of appearances" (quoted in Marks 56). In this case, Fares shoots close-ups to the family who seem irritated, frustrated and nervous from the (diegetic) sounds of war before these "war appearances" become part of their reality. When the bombing happens to be in the street on which they live, the camera moves to a long shot of the apartment and the street before the shot becomes shaky as the situation escalates.

The family moves from the apartment, one constrained space, to the next one, the bunker. Although the bunker has been set up for safety purposes, it is a closed setting with a dark lighting scheme. This constriction produces a sense of claustrophobia. We see how not only Zozo's family is restricted in their movement, but also everyone in the community is spatially and bodily restricted. As part of their day-to-day life, the constriction has made the community adopt the bunker as a living space. They can be seen sleeping, reading, and playing backgammon while they wait for peace to return to the streets.

The third time we see a closed chronotope in the (imagined) homeland is after a

different bombing kills Zozo's parents and sister. Zozo and his brother Dani survives since they are not inside the family's apartment. The two brothers come back into the apartment, and through a Kuleshov effect[5] and crosscutting, we see the dead bodies and we hear a battle's outbreak. The cuts show the destruction of the apartment, the deceased parents and the dismembered sister. Zozo looks at a place off-screen. There is only silence and this silence serves to emphasize the gravity of the situation. Dani can be heard, but there is a sense of disconnection between the diegetic sound and the characters during this situation. To enhance the gravity of the event, the voices and sounds are distorted and away from the setting. Dani orders Zozo to leave the apartment and the boys run into the streets. However, there are no people in the streets this time. The sequence goes from a long shot of the destroyed building to close-ups of the brothers looking at the city. The camera spins around, perhaps showing the sense of displacement and confusion that the brothers are experiencing.

As Dani and Zozo seek for shelter at the bunker, rebels find them on the streets. Dani hides Zozo in a trash container while he distracts the soldiers who are chasing them. We hear some shootings close to Zozo's hiding place. However, we never find out what happened to Dani and we can allude he is murdered. Zozo continues to wait for his brother. The scene cuts into darkness before he hears someone calling his name. In a dream, he hears his mother and finds himself in the family's apartment. Zozo starts

[5] The Kuleshov effect is an editing technique, which uses a series of montages to create a psychological reaction from the viewer by giving meaning to more than two sequential shots. The psychological reaction could not have been the same if it is an isolated single shot.

following the voice to the balcony and sees a light coming to him from the sky, perhaps a spiritual chronotope.[6] He cannot touch the light and the light dissolves back into the sky. Zozo comes back to the apartment and the screen turns red before cutting back to Zozo still sleeping next to the trash container. The spatial form of the trash container is closed and has dark lighting scheme represents the constriction that Zozo experiences, in his mind, body, and spirit.

**Journeying, Borders and Border Crossings**

With his parents and siblings dead, Zozo journeys through the city towards the airport in order to reunite with his grandparents in Sweden. According to Naficy, the journeys that accented filmmakers feature set the characters off from their homeland and shape "both their experiences and their identities henceforward" (223). Naficy explains that every accented film inscribes actual and metaphoric journey and invokes "other places and other times by means of their journey structures, epistolarity, liminal subjectivity, border aesthetics, and memory- and nostalgia- driven narratives" (237). These narratives are about human desire for traveling and establishing a home.

During the 80s, the airport in Beirut was located near Muslim neighborhoods. While journeying across the city, Zozo meets a girl name Rita, who lives near the airport. This can be an indication that she might be Muslim, in contrast to Zozo, who is a Maronite Christian. As the children journey to Rita's house, they walk through the

[6] Naficy doesn't comment on religion and its influence in accented filmmakers. Therefore, I use the term 'spiritual chronotope' to a multilayered temporality where that gives the option of having a superior force in the narrative.

railroads in a scenic landscape. The railroads are a representation of the homelands open chronotopes favors open settings and the landscape. Similarly, the railroads symbolize connecting the city to a new space. The railroads are transitional to Zozo's journeying and Rita's wandering. With bright natural lighting, the countryside landscape offers the wandering characters a moment of happiness.

The new friendship also gives Zozo a moment where he doesn't have to worry about survival. For a brief moment, he recaptures some of his lost innocence and childhood for a day. After these two characters meet, we can see some of the open spaces that contrast sharply with the city of Beirut. This landscape is beautiful and peaceful. Rita and Zozo run in the fields on the way to Rita's house. The girl teaches Zozo bird shooting and Zozo pretends he can shoot. As Zozo (and Fares) were born after the war had started, Zozo doesn't know how to separate violence from peaceful environments. His life in Beirut has created a trauma that he doesn't necessarily repress, but his sense of home and safety is slightly skewed. The editing becomes faster as he continues to shoot. The sequence ends with a shot of the sunset in the mountain from children's point of view in the urban park, Horsh Beirut.[7] For Zozo, it is his last happy moment in Lebanon before he becomes permanently deterritorialized.

The journey that the two children share allegorizes "wanderlust, flight, and freedom" as they are on route to the airport, a thirdspace chronotope and a border crossing space (Naficy 243). Although Zozo is physically, socially, and psychologically

[7] Horsh Beirut is an urban park in Beirut, Lebanon. The park was bombed in 1982 during the Lebanese Civil War. However, the film takes place in 1987 when the park had already been destroyed.

restricted, the checkpoint is a thirdspace that represents how the subject will extend across national boundaries. After being helped by a higher-ranking soldier, we see Zozo in a military van en route to the airport. Through a hole in the van, Zozo stares at the stars in the sky; there follows graphic match to Zozo already sitting in the plane. The sun makes another graphic match to the landing lights of the plane. However, we never see the airport in Lebanon.

Naficy highlights the role of border crossings. The airplane not only marks Zozo's departure from and rupture with Lebanon, but also his deterritorialization. The airport stands for a notion of a border. Similarly, the van and airplane are "a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion." The motion away from the homeland creates a distinction between "native" and "immigrant" (Newman 143). Lacatus explains that the break between the higher-ranking soldier's office to the van to the airport in Sweden "is a visual indication of the geographic and personal leap undertaken by Zozo" (125). From this point, "the story unravels through parallel action cutting, by alternating Zozo's life in Sweden and memories of the war in Lebanon (Lacatus 125).

Zozo's exile is a representation of the ideas of collective memory and alienation. His exile will include and record the hardships of becoming the *Other* in Sweden. According to Souied, "*Zozo* is one of the films depicting the experience of being in exile. Its second half is dedicated to recording the hardship and discrimination" faced by Zozo in Sweden (Khatib 2008: 68). The journeying of Zozo has profound empirical and symbolic values, for it shapes his exilic journeying. But most importantly, Zozo

undergoes a “journey of identity” once in the new land.

Upon his arrival in Sweden, Zozo can’t understand the airport customs officer, so he is taken to a waiting room, where they try to question him in English and Swedish. At this office, he experiences the deterritorialization of language for the first time. Naficy explains that the language barrier and language shift “is typical of exilic cinema and represent the in-between state of the migrant” (18). Analogously, the airport represents glocality – global and local ideas (Naficy 222). As Naficy describes, “the modes of transnational otherness inscribe and (re)enact in their films the fears, freedoms, and possibilities of split subjectivity and multiple identities” (271). For Zozo, deterritorialization creates split subjectivity and his displacement forms multiple cultural identities.

Through a glass wall, Zozo sees his grandparents who have come to meet him at the airport. On the drive to Zozo’s new home, Zozo’s grandparents cry over the loss of the other family members while an Arabic song plays in a non-diegetic plane. The song says, “your son is safe with me.” While the grandfather drives the car, there is reflection of the Swedish landscape in the window next to Zozo’s face in the backseat. Chow explains, “the vehicles thus become mobile prisons with a foreign landscape” (17). There is a dialectical relationship between “the inside closed spaces of the vehicle and the outside open spaces of nature and nation” (Naficy 257). During the drive, Zozo is looking out the window and the reflection the Swedish landscape is next to his face. This can be interpreted as symbolic to the double consciousness and fragmented identities that

Zozo will experience at his arrival in the new homeland. The shots go into showing extreme long shots of the landscape before it fades into the light. The physical journeying of Zozo comes to an end, but his exile has just begun.

**Epistolarity in the Film**

Naficy uses the term "epistolarity challenge" to suggest how classical narrative structures links history and memory in accented cinema. Exile and epistolarity require one another because "both are driven by distance, separation, absence, and loss and by the desire to bridge the multiple gaps" (101). Epistolarity includes the act of recording tapes and writing letters. These epistles are a metaphoric displacement of desire "to be with an other and to reimagine an elsewhere and other times" (Naficy 101).

First, Fares uses a recorded tape to link the family in Sweden and in Lebanon despite their distance, separation, and absence. On the tape we can hear the grandfather's accented speech and he can hardly speak the new homeland's language. Despite his struggles, the grandfather is enthusiastic about teaching some Swedish words to the family. We see how integrating to in a new society requires speaking the country's language and eventually understanding the unwritten rules of the new culture. The tape fuses direct and indirect elements of the grandfather's "double consciousness" and it also offers access to the character's interiority. The epistolarity expresses the desire of developing and communicating closely to other characters, but also the spectator.

Then, Zozo tries to connect to his homeland by writing to his friend Rita. In the letter Zozo asks her whether she can come and meet him in Sweden. Through the letter,

we access Zozo's "viewpoints and emotional states and are affected by the intimacy, immediacy, and intensity of their interiority" (Naficy 102). The speech is performed by the character and expresses dramatically his longing for Lebanon. In other words, the letter represents Zozo's desire to be with Rita and "reimagine an elsewhere and other times" (Naficy 101). After he finishes writing, an angelical Rita appears holding Zozo's pet chicken in the other side of the park. Seeing her gives some relief to Zozo before he goes and drops off the letter to her at the mail post. However, the aura surrounding Rita could mean as she could either that she is dead or she is the object of nostalgia, a radioactive fossil for Zozo.

**Photographs, the Fossils as Transitional/transnational objects**

In *The Skin of Film,* Laura U. Marks introduces the term fossil to recollection-images that embody different pasts (84).[8] These images "retain the shape of the cultural upheaval, perpetually inviting decoding of past conflicts" (124). As a recollection-object, it engages with memory and gives nonvisual meaning to the object. For Marks, the fossils and recollection-objects can be transitional, and therefore, these objects are not to aid assimilation to another culture. The objects "do not simply bring an aspect of their place of origin to a new site; they also make strange the place into which they arrive" (124). Similarly, the objects, particularly the fossils, can have a "radioactive" quality. If the fossil is radioactive, it embodies a past "that is incommensurable with the present the image depicts" (84). The radioactive fossils bring back lost histories at both, the place of

[8] The term is developed to frame documentaries rather than fictional narratives. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this paper, I incorporated the term 'fossil' to explain the bodily reactions of Zozo to physical objects that contain meaning.

origin and the place of destination. The objects embody a radical hybridity already present at both sites and enunciate body reactions from the memory embedded in the image (124).

Photographs can be considered fossils and recollection objects, for "it might be a past represented, it is a present image – the time frame, identity frame, and national frame, all rolled into one" (Gabriel 81). The photographs are past representations re-presented in a new context while still embodying the past. For Fares, these photographs are also transitional objects in the journeying of Zozo. The images are memory-images that Zozo carries on while he becomes displaced. In the narrative, the family photographs become not only a radioactive fossil, but also transitional objects.

In the family's apartment, there is a portrait of Zozo's grandparents who are already in exile and settled in Sweden. Zozo's perception of Sweden is a utopia based on his grandparents' photos and descriptions. The photograph serves as an idyllic chronotope because the grandparents and the background in the landscape represent "love idyll, family idyll and agricultural idyll" (Naficy 146). This idyll is comparable to the current reality of war-torn Beirut. Similarly, the photograph serves as a transitional object. Before the journey starts, the photograph functions as a marker for the place of arrival. The image provides visual elements for Zozo and his family to see the new land and become acquainted to new land.

Teshome Gabriel writes, "In any image there is always a picture of difference. Every image is a mask; it conceals another image. Any single image is in fact a

compendium of several images that prepare the way in which each individual image is seen and read" (81). For Zozo, the grandparents' photograph helps him and gives him strength to continue the journey alone through Beirut on his way to the airport. The image becomes a marker for the "spirit of arrival." The object, later on, becomes a transitional object because Zozo's cultural reality is in flux. Employing Marks' concept of transitional object, this photograph makes the place of arrival a bit more familiar. However, it won't help in the transition between cultural realities (Marks 124).

The second recollection-image is seen while in exile. Zozo wakes up from his grandparents' bed to explore the living room where he sees several pictures. Zozo looks at a portrait of his family and puts away all the pictures of his deceased family in a lower drawer. This is his way of repressing the memories and forgetting his traumatic experience while journeying. As Sara Marino explains, "immigrants do not completely enjoy their 'recollection' of home memories nor their new life in the country of arrival, and loneliness comes as an inevitable outcome of trans-nationality" (132). However, Zozo brings the picture out of the drawer later on in the narrative.

This "home recollection memory" can be interpreted as a radioactive cultural fossil. The family's photograph brings back the stories in Lebanon where the family separated and died while it also incorporates the memory and trauma prevailing in his life in Sweden. After facing language barriers, Zozo sits in his new home while staring at a family picture. The images start producing stress in Zozo as he hears Danni telling Zozo to hurry up, and he re-experiences losing his brother and the rest of his family in the same

day. Recalling the past, Fares uses flash cuts, which are cuts between the past and present. The flash cuts woke a memory of the past that might be forgotten or painful. In the case of Zozo, this flash cutting explores the nostalgia for his past in Lebanon. Marks argues, "meaning resides in objects, as habits stores memory in the body" (121). Therefore, it is not unusual that the photograph perpetuates past conflicts while it also expresses Zozo's yearning for the family to be together again.

**'Double Consciousness' as a Form of Fragmented Identity and Deterritorialization**

In negotiations of the characters' subjectivity, accented filmmakers not only assert the relevance of deterritorialized identities but also their positions within society. Their *otherness* is reflected in their work and as a transnational identity in different forms "of fragment narratives, consisting of ellipses, ruptures, and generic juxtapositions" (Naficy 271). According to Marino, "on a screen, transnational filmmakers are capable of producing ambiguities and doubts about the absolutes and taken-for-granted values and norms both of the home and the host societies" (136). The most common themes in these productions are "identity, memory, displacement, sense of belonging, and territoriality" (Marino 145).

In cinema, the reflection of individuals in water or mirrors often represents how the individual perceives the self. In the case of Zozo, at his arrival in Sweden, he sees his reflection in the water of the lake without getting a clear picture of himself. By the time Zozo has learned some Swedish through reading the comic "Bamse," the strongest bear in the world, and watching TV, he starts practicing in the mirror. There is a sound bridge

from Zozo in front of the mirror to Zozo presenting himself at school. Despite his efforts to interact with his classmates, Zozo feels disconnected due to the language barrier. These mirroring scenes "challenge the hegemony and homogeneity claimed," not only by the individual's identity, but also by the nation-state (Loshitzky 9).

The language barrier brings Zozo into conflict with Swedish bullies who are not friendly towards foreigners. After several incidents, the bullies come to confront Zozo and his new friend Leo, a Swedish outcast. When Zozo and the bully start fighting, the school comes under fire. As a part of dream or hallucination, bombs start dropping from the sky and all the kids start running for their safety. Zozo remains motionless until his mother comes, holds his hand and runs with him avoiding the bombs. The bombs are a "primary and symbolic political" object for Zozo in the narrative as they follow him in his homeland and host land. This might refer to his enforced exile due to war and his experience in exile while he has internal war to come to terms with his loss and migration (Gilroy 27).

While running, Zozo stops and asks his mother why she abandoned him. For Zozo understanding his abandonment has become more important than saving his life from this imaginary bombing in Sweden. She explains that she didn't mean to leave Zozo behind. They say, "I love you" to each other and hug before Zozo comes back to reality. His psyche unconsciously relates his alienation in Sweden to the war in Lebanon. In the imaginary, his reflections on trauma and memory present him with two options: respond with violence or let go. Zozo chooses to let go.

Zozo then turns his back to the bully and leaves with Leo. At the end of the film, Leo and Zozo are fishing together at the lake while Zozo's grandparents are playing cards. Fares uses the lake as idyllic landscape to signal that there is hope for Zozo, other immigrants, and even outcast Swedes. In this idyllic landscape, the two outcasts converge and integrate the two cultures. While the boys are laughing, the camera zooms out and we get a better overview of the lake. The lake becomes another thirdspace where everything comes together, "subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (Soja quoted in Naficy 213).

**Conclusion**

*Zozo* could be considered accented due to the multilingual dynamics: its language, narrative, aesthetics, and visual style choices all derive from Josef Fares's home and adopted countries. As Lacatus explains, filmmakers "enact a story that draws heavily from their own life experience as migrants" (108). The aim of accented film is to display the exilic experience of the author. By creating accented narratives, the filmmaker re-appropiates his exile and employs a mechanism for the "re-writing – this re-imagining of the past" (Studlar and Desser 10). Even though Fares that denies the film is autobiographical, "He re-experiences and savors these details as he documents them in film" (Naficy 230). Though the filmmaker goes back two decades into the past, Fares

returns to a time of childhood when he comes to terms with his disrupture from the homeland.

The film reconciles two film cultural traditions in the East and in the West, the homeland and hostland. Lina Khatib claims that Zozo is part of the Lebanese younger generation of postwar filmmakers who used the war as a background to their daily activities in contrast to previous generations, who had used the war as *the* subject for filmmaking (67). Like *Zozo*, Ziad Doueri's *West Beyrouth* (1998) and Danielle Arbid's *In the Battlefields* (2004) reenact the difficult environment of their directors grew up in, how their relationships developed and were affected by the war, how they could still have fun under those extreme circumstances, and how they have come to terms with the war. These Lebanese post-civil war filmmakers, including Fares, invited Lebanese and international audiences to reflect on Lebanon's past, present and future through the individual, and sometimes collective, narratives of individuals who survived the war. However, the link between these films was "their presentation of characters facing the choice between exile or death" (Soueid quoted in Khatib 68).

On the other hand, as part of the Swedish "immigrant film" wave, *Zozo* emphasizes issues experienced by first and second-generation immigrants. Josef Fares represents the émigré experience from the East and assimilation to the West from a double consciousness standpoint. Lacatus notes that the film illustrates a "counter argument to Swedish nationalistic rhetoric that ties immigrants to a reality of 'non-Swedish' sociocultural *otherness* represented one dimensionally as exotic, essentially

inferior, and potentially dangerous" (127). The hybridity in the narrative is accepted as part of Swedish national cinema and opens to multiculturalism in what it is considered to be a homogeneous country. However, double consciousness will prevail in this new immigrant generation of Swedes.

To reconcile his double consciousness and multicultural identity, Fares inscribes in his narrative several elements of accented cinema such as chronotopes of the (imagined) homeland, border crossing, epistolarity, fossils and double consciousness. This film frames not only these elements in the narrative, but it explores the politics of identity for an accented filmmakers. For accented filmmakers, as Naficy writes, "home and travel, placement and displacement are always already intertwined" (229). Therefore, it is not unusual that the film uses transitional and transnational objects that link the homeland and hostland while also connecting the two of them after departure. Additionally, the cultural duality of the character Zozo is a reflection of Fares position across cultures. Even though Fares reflects on his place of birth as a Westernized subject, he is "a version of the postcolonial type" (Gabriel 76). Therefore, *Zozo* is an illustration of Naficy's accented cinema and cannot limited to in one national film tradition, but to two, Lebanese and Swedish Cinema.

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